

REMARKS

Claims 1-7 are pending. Claims 1 and 6 have been amended. No new matter is presented.

As a formal matter, Applicant the Office Action contains rejections on pages 2-7 and rejections on another set of pages 2-8. It seems that the only difference between the rejections on the two separate set of pages relates to the double patenting rejections. Applicant will address each rejection that is not duplicated on another sheet of the Action for the sake of completeness.

Applicant thanks the Examiner for conducting an interview on May 17, 2006. During that interview, the prior art reference to Yura was discussed and the Examiner suggested a claim amendment to recite that the nip forming member is a one-piece member. The Examiner also indicated that he would reconsider whether Yura actually discloses, in the body of the specification, that the contact area between the fixing belt and the nip forming member outside the fixing nip is smaller on an entrance side of the fixing nip than on an exit side of the fixing nip.

Claim 1 is provisionally rejected on the ground of non-statutory obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claim 1 of co-pending Application Nos. 10/805228, 10/805244, & 10/805250. Since this rejection is provisional, however, Applicant need file a terminal disclaimer only when one of these applications issues as a patent and respectfully declines to do so now.

Claims 1, 2, 6 and 7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Yura, U.S. Patent No. 6,795,678. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 recites that “a contact area between the fixing belt and the one-piece nip forming member outside the fixing nip is smaller on an entrance side of the fixing nip than on an exit side of the fixing nip.”

Yura discloses two nip forming members, elements 18 and 19. Neither of these nip forming members alone meet the limitation of a contact area between the fixing belt and the one-

piece nip forming member outside the fixing nip being smaller on an entrance side of the fixing nip than on an exit side of the fixing nip. This is clear from Fig. 5. Further, the specification of Yura is silent with regard to this feature. Thus, since claim 1 recites a one-piece nip forming member where a contact area between the fixing belt and the one-piece nip forming member outside the fixing nip is smaller on an entrance side of the fixing nip than on an exit side of the fixing nip, and neither element 18 or 19 alone meet this limitation, Yura must fail to teach or suggest the features of claim 1. Further, even taken together, Yura still fails to positively set forth the limitation relating to the contact area. For at least these reasons, the features of claim 1 are not taught or suggested by Yura.

Claim 6 recites the above-noted feature of claim 1, and is thus allowable for the same reasons claim 1 is allowable. The remaining claims are allowable at least due to their respective dependencies. Applicant requests that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 4 and 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yura. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 4 and 5 are allowable at least due to their respective dependencies and because Yura fails to teach all of the features for which it is cited. Applicants request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yura in view of Yasui, U.S. Patent No. 6,807,386. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 3 is allowable at least due to its indirect dependency from claim 1 and because Yura fails to teach all of the features for which it is cited and Yasui fails to overcome the deficiencies of Yura. Applicant requests that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 1, 2, 6 and 7 are provisionally rejected on the ground of nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1, 2, 4, 6-10 of co-pending Application No. 10/805,228. Since this rejection is provisional, however, Applicant need file a

terminal disclaimer only when one of these applications issues as a patent and respectfully declines to do so now.

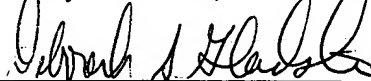
Claims 1, 2, 6 and 7 are provisionally rejected on the ground of nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1, 10-12 and 15 of co-pending Application No. 10/805,250. Since this rejection is provisional, however, Applicant need file a terminal disclaimer only when one of these applications issues as a patent and respectfully declines to do so now.

Claims 4 and 5 are provisionally rejected on the ground of nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 7 and 9 of co-pending Application No. 10/805,228. Since this rejection is provisional, however, Applicant need file a terminal disclaimer only when one of these applications issues as a patent and respectfully declines to do so now.

In the event the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to **Deposit Account No. 03-1952** referencing Attorney Docket No. **204552032300**.

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Respectfully submitted,

By 

Deborah S. Gladstein

Registration No.: 43,636

MORRISON & FOERSTER LLP

1650 Tysons Blvd, Suite 300

McLean, Virginia 22102

(703) 760-7753